



Department
for Transport

From the Minister of State
Andrew Stephenson MP

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Chris Heaton-Harris MP
House of Commons
London
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Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

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29 September 2021

Dear Chris,

Thank you for your email of 13 September, on behalf of your constituents about HS2.

HS2 is a project of national significance and one of the Government's flagship infrastructure projects. I appreciate that it is therefore a matter of great interest to the general public.

Firstly, I would like to address the point made on Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) in the video. The use of confidentiality agreements (NDAs) is part of standard business practice, and cannot be characterised as a 'blanket obligation' in working with HS2 Ltd. The Company works with thousands of businesses, organisations and individuals in the course of the developing and delivering the railway and has confidentiality agreements in place with a minority of these, in order to protect commercial interest.

HS2 Ltd uses Confidentiality Agreements to facilitate the exchange of information with businesses, communities and councils. This could be enabling a company to share information about a product they are developing or producing, or enabling a business (which is selling land to HS2 or relocating) to share information about its revenue/profit to enabling accurate valuation. In order to provide enhanced transparency, HS2 Ltd discloses in its Annual Report & Accounts how many confidentiality agreements it entered into annually.

Separately, as part of the Government's decision to proceed with the project last year, new governance arrangements were put in place to significantly increase Ministerial oversight, transparency, and accountability including with my appointment as the dedicated Minister for HS2. The Department for Transport has committed to providing six-monthly updates on HS2 to Parliament, with the second update provided in March and the next update due to be provided soon.

In the meantime, the Government remains relentlessly focused on controlling costs, to ensure this ambitious new railway delivers its wealth of benefits at value for money for the taxpayer.

HS2 is at the heart of our plans to build back better from Covid-19, creating thousands of jobs and providing certainty at a time when people need it the most. The scheme will contribute towards sustainable growth in towns, cities and regions across the country, spreading prosperity and opportunity more evenly. It will act as a catalyst for job creation, the development of new homes, and ultimately the regeneration of major cities and towns along the HS2 route. By building HS2, we can ensure there's a low carbon alternative at the heart of our future, greener transport system.

HS2 has rightly been subject to a great deal of Parliamentary and public scrutiny. The debate referred to by your constituent took place on Monday 13 September. We will continue to keep the public, and Parliament, closely informed on the progress of the project.

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrew', with a horizontal line underneath.

ANDREW STEPHENSON MP

MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT